

JESUS WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

NO. 612

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Then came he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him,
Lord, do you wash my feet?"
John 13:6.*

OUR Savior had so steadfastly set His face towards the awful sufferings of His passion, that when they actually approached He was not in the slightest degree disturbed or disconcerted. If you were perfectly aware that tomorrow morning, after a night of terrible agony, you would be led forth to a cruel and ignominious death, you would probably feel like men distracted with terrible apprehensions. Or at any rate, if through grace you were able to be calm and peaceful, your mind would scarcely be in a fit state to minister consolation to others, or to conceive new methods of instruction for your friends. But behold your Lord and Master!

It is eventide of the same night in which He was betrayed. He foreknows that the bloody sweat within an hour or two will crimson all His flesh. He is well aware that he who is eating bread with Him will that night betray Him. He foresees that He must feel the Roman scourge, and be the victim of Jewish slander. He knows right well that He must bear all the wrath of God on the behalf of His people, and yet He sits at supper, He feasts as if no unusual cloud were lowering.

And when the supper is over, His inventive mind is fully at work with admirable plans of instruction for His disciples, and among the rest He takes off His upper garment, He wraps Himself about the loins with a towel, He goes to them as they are reclining at full length around the table, and coming behind them He begins to wash the feet of first one and then another. What blessed calmness of mind! What hallowed serenity of spirit! O that our hearts were equally fixed on God in our days of trial and grief!

Without question we may go further, and take most solemn notice that there was in the near approach of death a joy in Jesus' heart into which no stranger could enter. *Now* was about to be accomplished that which He had longed for. Did He not say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I die"? Did this account for His giving out a hymn of praise on that doleful night? For, "After supper they sang a hymn." Did that account for His adding these remarkable words, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him"? Did His joy in the prospect of what He was about to accomplish for His people swell to the very highest, just about the time when the fountains of the depths of His griefs were about to be broken up, and His spirit to be flooded in agony as He cried, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"? O to know His joy—the joy of loving even unto death!

Let us come at once to the teaching of the Savior, and let it be surrounded with an unusual interest, because of the fact that it is His *dying* teaching. Let us see Him as He girds Himself with the towel, remembering that He was soon to be girt with the bands of death—let us see Him, I say, with a more profound interest, because He is just upon the verge of these terrible depths where all the waves and billows of JEHOVAH's justice dashed over Him.

His sermon beginning, "Let not your heart be troubled," is His swan song. These are the last drops of His life that He is now spending—at the supper table you have the wine which He keeps until now. As we see Him washing His disciples' feet, we shall discover choice love worthy of the last solemn hour of departure.

We shall take the text in four ways. First, *here is matter for inquiry*, “Lord, *do* you wash my feet?” Secondly, here is *matter for admiration*, “Lord, *do* you wash my feet?” Thirdly, here is *matter for gratitude*. Fourthly, here is *matter for imitation*.

I. HERE IS MATTER FOR INQUIRY.

We know that the Savior washed the feet of Peter, but does He wash our feet also? We do not expect, of course, the literal transaction to take place, but is there anything in the conduct of Christ now analogous to His washing Peter's feet when on earth?

He *has* washed all believers, once for all, in His most precious blood. But of this we do not speak this morning. Cleansing, as before the bar of justice, is completely accomplished forever for all the chosen by the great blood-shedding upon Calvary. That is a matter of the past—a thing for which to bless God for all eternity. “We *are* clean. Through Jesus' blood we are clean.” But here is another kind of washing—not of the entire man, but of the feet only, not with blood, but with water—not in the fountain filled from the Savior's veins, but in a basin filled with water. Does our Lord Jesus do anything of this kind now, anything so humbling to Himself, and yet so needful for us? I answer, *yes*, He does.

And first, does not the Savior perform an action parallel with this, when He watches over *the temporal affairs of His people*? You know, beloved, that not a hair of your head falls to the ground without His care. In all your afflictions He is afflicted, and as the angel of God's presence He saves *you* and carries *you*. Your most trifling trouble may be taken in prayer to Christ, and spread before Him with as much certainty of deliverance as when Hezekiah spread Sennacherib's letter before the Lord, for Jesus waits to be gracious to His own. In every transaction we should adore the providential care of our great Shepherd and friend, for the government is upon *His* shoulders.

Now, when Jesus thus superintends your mean affairs, looks to your family troubles, and bears your household cares, saying to you, “Cast all your care on me, for I care for you,” is He not in effect doing for you what He did for Peter, washing your feet—for He is caring for your lowest part, and minding the poor dust-stained body. O King of glory! the stars would not make a crown worthy of You. The tempest is but a poor chariot for Your glory, and the winds are but slow coursers to be harnessed to Your cart. And yet You stoop from all this greatness to observe man, who is less than a worm, to observe *me*, less than the least of all Your saints, and to care for me as a mother cares for her child. It is even so. He *does* do it. He does, in this sense, wash His people's feet.

When Jesus Christ *puts away from us day by day our daily infirmities and sins*, does He not wash our feet? Last night, when you bowed the knee, you could not help confessing that there had been much in the week's transactions which was not worthy of your standing and profession. And even tonight, when the engagements of this day are over, you will have to mourn that you foolishly committed the very sins which you repented of weeks ago, that you have fallen again into the very sloughs of folly and sin from which special grace delivered you long ago.

And yet Jesus Christ will have great patience with you. He will hear your confession of sin. He will say, “I will, be you clean.” He will again apply the blood of sprinkling. He will speak peace to your conscience and remove every spot. Oh, it is a great act of eternal love when Christ once for all absolves the sinner, takes him from under the dominion of the law, and puts him into the family of God. But what long-suffering and patience there is when the Savior, with much long-suffering, bears the daily follies of the recipient of so much mercy, day by day, and hour by hour, putting away the constant sin of the erring but yet beloved child. To dry up a flood of sin is something marvelous, but to endure the constant dropping of daily sins, to bear with that constant weary trying of patience—this is divine indeed! To blot out the whole of sin like a thick cloud, this is a great and matchless power, as well as grace—but to remove the mist of every morning, and the dampness of every night—oh! this is condescension. I wish I could describe it. It is condescension well imaged in the washing of Peter's feet.

Consider again. Our poor prayers which are very much the feet of our soul, since with them we climb to heaven, with them we run after God—*our poor prayers always need washing*. It is oftentimes easier, brethren, to do a thing over at once than it is to mend and patch up a work which has been badly

done by others. Then what patience it must require in Christ's case to take my poor, imperfect, and polluted prayers, and make them fit to be presented before His Father's face! There are His own prayers for me—I thank Him for them, for they prevail. But I cannot help also blessing Him that He should take *my* prayers, and put *them* into the censer, and offer *them* before His Father's face. For I am certain that before *they* can have been fit to offer they must have experienced a deal of washing. John tells us that He offers “the prayers of saints”—this is humbling Himself indeed!

Oh, how much of redundancy must have been taken away from our petitions when we have asked for what we ought not to have desired! How much of omission must have been made up when we have forgotten to ask for the things which we most needed! How much of unbelief He must take out of our prayers! How much coldness, deadness of heart! How much formality, wandering of thought! O how much holy life and unction, holy faith and holy joy, must the dear Redeemer infuse into our supplications before they are fit to come up before the ears of the Lord God of hosts! Yes, in patiently bearing with my prayers He does daily wash my feet.

Think yet again. *Jesus makes our works acceptable*. These may be compared to the soul's feet. It is by the feet that a man expresses his activity. The *walk* of a Christian—by this we mean the good works which the Christian performs for his Master. But look at our works. If Christ would simply throw all our good works into a heap, and let them rot, that would be most deserving of them. If He would take our almsgiving, our preachings, our teachings of others, our prayers, and thoughts, and works all together, and just cast them into Tophet's fire—how dare we complain?

But instead of that He is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labor of love, but counts that here His Father is glorified that we bear much fruit. We remember to have heard of someone who made sugar out of old rags, but then it was found that the sugar cost a great deal more than the sugar was worth. The manufacture cost was more than the goods were worth when produced—and judging from our point of view, this is something like our works.

Jesus Christ makes sweetness out of the poor rags of our good works. Surely I may say they cost Him more in the manufacturing than ever the raw material could have been worth, or the finished works themselves are worth, except in His esteem. Could He not, if He pleased, convert men without our preaching? But He will not do it. He would rather that they should be brought in by our imperfect preaching, and therefore He washes our preaching—He washes our feet.

Could He not save sinners without you, my sister—without you, my brother? And yet He sets you longing after souls, and opens your mouth to speak a good word to them, and He accepts what you do. But oh! what condescension is there, what tenderness, what divine stooping from His loftiness, that He should cleanse your works! It is more than He ever did for angels. When an angel had defiled his service, He banished him from heaven. But with all the imperfection of our service, we expect that in Christ we shall be welcomed into heaven with the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

If you want other instances of the familiar condescension of Christ, let me remind you of *how patiently He is content to suffer in His people's sufferings*. Not a pang shoots through that head of yours but Jesus knows and feels it. Not a grief makes that bosom heave in which Christ is not a partaker. “I will make all their bed in their sickness.” Oh! what a blessed text is that! As one old expositor says, “Not merely make their pillow, but their bolster and their bed, and make *all* their bed, where their feet lie, where their head lies. All, all of it. I will come, and I will have such sympathy with them in their entire grief, that from the beginning to the end of it I will make them happy in the midst of grief through My divine consolations.” “I will make all their bed in their sickness.”

Have you not had choice manifestations from Christ in your worst seasons, so exactly fitted to the peculiarity of your case, that you did not know which to admire most, the love which visited you, or the condescending care which so brought itself down to your case, and sat down at your bedside, and put itself so entirely into your position, that it could feel as you felt, and speak to you just the words which your case required? The Lord Jesus loves His people so, that every day He is washing their feet. Their poorest action He accepts. Their deepest sorrow He feels. Their smallest wish He hears, and their

greatest sin He forgives. He is still their servant as well as their friend. Still He takes the basin. Still He wears the towel.

It is not only majestic deeds that He performs, as, wearing the miter on His brow, and the precious jewels glittering on His breastplate, He stands up to plead. But humbly, patiently, still like a servant He goes about among His people, washing His disciples' feet. I would to God I could speak worthily on such a theme as this. But it is true, as your experience must tell you, that "He remembers our low estate; for his mercy endures forever."

Before I pass from this point, it is a matter of inquiry for some here, "Lord, *do* you wash *my* feet?" Some of you are not washed by Christ, for you live without thinking of Him. "I never did any harm," says one, "that I know of." I will ask you another question—what did you ever do for Christ? Can you answer that? You must reply, "I have done nothing for Him whatever." Ah! then, if you have never been enabled to do anything for Him, I fear it is because you have lived thoughtlessly, without a care for Him. But if He had ever washed your feet, you could not forget Him. And little as it might be, yet you would have done something, and you would now be desiring to do more.

Ah! my hearers, some of you are so far from ever having your feet washed daily, that you have never been washed at all. "There is a fountain filled with blood," but filled in vain, as far as you are concerned. There is a Savior, but you are unsaved. There is balm in Gilead, but you are not healed. There is a Physician there, but you are still sick. There is life in Christ, but you are dead. The bronze serpent is lifted up, but you are dying of the fiery serpent's bite. One look at Jesus will save, but that look you have not given. You are without God, without Christ, without hope, and "strangers from the commonwealth of Israel."

May God the Holy Spirit visit you with His quickening power, and convince you of your sin this morning! May He make you feel uneasy till you find Christ! May He give you a hungering and a thirsting after Him that will never be satisfied till you clasp Him in your arms and say, "Christ is mine." I would to God that I had not to make this remark, but I must make it in faithfulness to your souls. You are obliged to answer, "No, no, no. The Lord Jesus has never washed my feet." But then send up the prayer, "Lord, do it. Lord, do it now for Your love's sake."

II. Our text is, in the second place, MATTER FOR ADMIRATION, and that, too, in several respects.

It is matter for admiration when we consider *the freeness of the deed*. "Lord, do you wash my feet?" It is perfectly wonderful that He should, for we have scarcely desired the mercy. If you look the chapter through, you do not find that Peter asked Christ to do it. Peter was lying down. He had just been eating at the supper. He had no thought of Christ's washing his feet. There was not one of the twelve that ever dreamed of such a thing. And when the Lord began to wash the feet of one, the others did not say, "Lord, come and do the same to me." No, it was unsolicited, unexpected. He comes, without any prayers or supplications on their part, and He begins to wash their feet.

Peter is surprised. It is great goodness on Christ's part to do what we ask Him to do—to hear our prayers when we really feel our need. But does He perform for us such menial, such generous acts, as to wash our feet without being asked? Oh, beloved, if Christ did no more for us than we ask Him to do, we would perish forever. For nine out of ten of the things which He gives us we never asked for, and what if I were to say that three out of four of them we scarcely know that we want?

We do not *know* our own needs. We have a general view of our necessities, wholesale, as it were, but our daily needs, our daily wants, who among us can tell them! Christ's sufferings are said, according to the Greek Liturgy, to have had unknown depths, "Your unknown sufferings." Were not those unknown sufferings endured for our unknown sins, and to make a supply for our unknown wants, that we might have that multitude of mercies which we may style unknown mercies?

We should not only bless God for the mercies which we have known, but for those which we have not known—for probably those make up the larger proportion. You who are Christians, some of you who have been believers in Christ ten or twenty years—have there not been many nights on which you

have gone to bed without any particular sense of guilt, and without any special intercession for peculiar cleansing? You have forgotten to ask for the cleansing, but He has never forgotten to give it, He has spontaneously washed your feet.

You have risen in the morning. You were not aware that any special danger would come to you, and you did not pray for special protection, but yet *He* knew it. And unasked and unsought for He has followed you, held the shield over you, and kept you from danger. He has washed your feet without your having desired it, or having known that He had done it. Let His name be praised for this. These unsought favors of unspeakable love, these perpetual mercies of unslumbering carefulness—let them wake us now to gratitude, and now may we exclaim with wonder, “Lord, is it so? Do You always continue thus to wash my feet?”

The next subject of wonder is *the glory of the person*. “Lord! King! Master! God! Everlasting! Eternal! Almighty! King of kings, and Lord of lords! Do *you*—do *YOU* wash my feet? You call the stars by their names, and they shine by Your light. Mazzaroth comes forth in his season at Your bidding. You guide Arcturus with his sons! The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours. You sit upon the circle of the heavens, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. You hold the waters in the hollow of Your hand, You mete out heaven with Your span. *Lord, do you wash my feet?*”

When You were on earth You tread the waters. The depths knew You, and were like marble beneath Your feet. You frightened grim death himself, for Lazarus came forth at Your bidding from the shades of the grave. Fevers knew You—leprosy, paralysis, epilepsy—all diseases understood their Master’s voice, and fled at Your bidding. The winds were hushed at Your will—even the devils were subject to You. Though You were veiled in manhood Your creatures perceived Your greatness. Angels ministered unto You, and the heavens were opened unto You. *And do you wash my feet?*

O my brethren meditate on this! It is far more a theme for thought than for speech. He whom the angels worship takes a towel and girds Himself. Listen to the song, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Your glory. All the earth does worship You, You eternal Son of the Father.” “Lord, do you wash my feet?”

Oh, think of this, spiritual men and women! Think till your hearts melt with love. No one else could cleanse us. The Infinite God must take away the infinite blackness and filth of His people’s sins! What a stoop is here! Let us lift up our eyes and wonder. Let us lift up our voices and praise His name, that He should ever wash our feet.

Change again the word. *Observe the lowliness of the office*. “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Here comes a traveler who has journeyed far. He is very weary. There is much dust upon his sandals, and his feet are stained with travel. As soon as he treads the threshold of the hospitable house, a black slave, a servant, a hired servant, takes off his sandals, brings a basin, a pitcher full of water, and begins to pour the water upon his feet, having first loosened the latches of his shoes and taken them away.

The host does not stoop to this office. It is not the part of a master to wash feet. It is servile, menial, humiliating work. Yet this, which was the lowest of all offices in the East, is that which the Savior undertakes—not in fiction and metaphor, but in reality, for every one of us. “Lord, do you wash my feet? To wash my head, Lord, is very gracious. To purge my mind from evil thoughts is very loving. To wash my hands, to take my heart and make that clean is very condescending. But do You absolutely do a slave’s work, and wash my feet?”

Lord, will You take the meanest part of me, and wash *that*? I know You have said, You will sanctify my spirit and my soul—there is much there. But will You sanctify *my body*, too—my feet, the lowest part of the man, the meanest part? Are You not content to leave spot or wrinkle upon me anywhere, and therefore do You humble Yourself to the meanest, basest, lowest action of all—to wash my feet?”

Truly, beloved, this is subject of wonder. And yet the wonder is excelled if you remember that He shared a slave’s death, as well as a slave’s life—a slave’s life—when He washed our feet. A slave’s death—when they sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, and afterwards pierced His hands and His feet. I put this deed of love in contrast.

Conceive Him now in the highest heavens, with the keys of heaven and earth and hell swinging at His side, holding the silver scepter by which He governs all creation. Can you conceive Him, when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father? And yet He, that selfsame one, comes down from the grandeur of heaven, and the splendor of infinite honor, and He *washes*, absolutely washes, in a slave's garb and after a menial manner, *the feet* of His disciples! Oh, that we felt a tender admiration worthy of this miracle of love!

Once again, there is a note of wonder if you lay the stress upon the word *my*, "Lord, do you wash *my* feet?" Perhaps to some of you this will be the greatest marvel of all—the *unworthiness of the object of this washing*. "Do you wash *my* feet? You have favored me with more mercies than the most of men. You have overwhelmed me with Your bounties. And yet my heart is hard towards You. I am often unbelieving, forgetful, slothful, careless. You might well cast me away forever. Because of my ingratitude You might well say, "Depart, I will have no more to do with you. I have had enough of patience. I cannot endure your ill manners!"

Yet do You, Lord, absolutely condescend to wash *my* feet? Herein You have displayed Yourself more gloriously than ever. Your grace has out-graced itself." Thus would the preacher speak, and he thinks he hears you follow him. "Lord," you say, "I once cursed You to Your face. There was a time when Your holy day was my best day of business—when Your house was a place which I abhorred. Your Book was unread. My knee was never bent to You. I boasted of my own righteousness. I was a sinner black and filthy—and do you wash *my* feet!!"

I hear a sister, with peculiar tenderness, say, "O Jesus, I would gladly wash Your feet with my tears, and wipe them with the hair of my head, for I have been a sinner. And do you wash *my* feet!!" I think I hear another say, "Lord, I once denied You. I made a profession of Your faith, but in an evil hour I fell. I went into sin. I said, 'I know not the man!' And do you wash *my* feet!!" I hear another say, "Lord, You know my private sins, my secret vices. I dare not tell into the ear of my fellow-creature the faults into which I have fallen. I am only fit to be firewood in hell-fire. There is nothing in me but what is not damnable. I am *altogether* as an unclean thing, and do you wash *my* feet!!"

Oh, you who are the people of God, cannot you all find some special reason for wonder at this? There are some of you who are so poor, that even some of your own Christian brethren are wicked enough to be half ashamed to acknowledge you. Yet Jesus Christ washes your feet! Your clothes would not sell for sixpence, and yet He washes your feet! You scarcely have enough shoe leather to keep your feet from the cold, and yet He washes them! You have been laughed at, and despised, and ridiculed and yet you have Christ for your foot-washer!

The moment your name is mentioned, there are some ready at once to slander you and abuse you—yet so tenderly does Jesus love you, that He washes your foulest part. However, I must leave you to think—for I cannot talk—I must leave you to think on such a precious passage as this. Certainly the angels of heaven will never leave off wondering how it can be, that their King, their Prince, their Leader, could so humble Himself as to become a servant of servants—to take the very meanest of His people, and declare that He will wash their feet, aye, and do it, too.

One more subject for wonder. It is perfectly marvelous to remember that *Christ does so completely wash our feet*. "Do *You* wash my feet, Lord, then there cannot be any filth on them. Do *You* wash my feet? Then they must be clean. It cannot be that *You* could wash, and yet filth remain." When things are washed by careless servants, they want washing again. But when they are washed by the loving hands of Jesus, washed by Him who made heaven and earth, surely they cannot be badly done.

Come, then, you who feel you have been sinning the last week—you who are God's people, you who are resting on Christ, but have a sense of guilt upon your consciences, and cannot get rid of it, and are sighing and crying—do ask this question, "Lord, do you wash my feet? Then I will come to You. I will come with my feet all filthy if there is such a bath as this to be washed in. If my sins are returned to me, and appear to remain upon my conscience, if You wait still to wash me from present guilt and present depravity, then here I am—as at the first I came, I come again. Nothing but Your merit do I rely

upon. Nothing but Your love is my confidence. I give myself up to You—take me as I am, and wash me clean.”

I say it is a subject for admiration, how thoroughly clean Christ does wash His people, so that they can really cry, “There is no spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, even upon my feet. I shall be presented holy, unblameable, and unproveable in the sight of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord.”

III. Now we will turn from admiration to what may be more practical—to GRATITUDE. I hope we already feel that heaven-born flame glowing in our souls.

Here is matter for gratitude then. I heard the other day of a meeting for prayer, at which my dear brother Offord, who so marvelously made confession of sin at our great prayer meeting in the first week of January, was moved to make another confession. And he did so in such a manner that the whole assembly was moved, and there were audible sobs and cries from God’s people while they confessed their transgressions. No sooner had he done so, than some brother, wise above what is written, rose in the assembly, and said he thanked God he could not join in the confession, his sins were all forgiven him, and therefore he had no sins to confess. He stood before God so accepted in Christ that he had no sins whatever to make confession of. His prayer went far to spoil the meeting and to grieve the people of God. I do occasionally meet with erring brethren, who say, “I never make any confession of sin.” “I have prayed for months,” said one to me, “and I have never made any confession of sin. I believe all my sins are forgiven, and I have none to confess.” Now, at the very first mention of this, do you not feel shocked? The holy sensibilities of a child of God suffer violence from the very thought of such absence of repentance.

I would have been surprised if I did not hold myself prepared to hear any monstrosity from persons tinctured with the gall of Plymouth Brethrenism. Concerning that sect, much as I love and respect many of its members, I dare not say less than this, that God alone knows what they will teach tomorrow, for they seem to be given up to the inventions of their own vainglorious minds, to concoct and devise delusions without number. They have one mark of the Babylon which they profess to abhor, for *mystery* is written on their very brow. I pray God to keep our young people from their company, for their professions and pretences are such as might, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. Gracious men I grant them to be, but as to doctrine, as mad as March hares, and as perverse as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke.

When I first heard this doctrine of not confessing sins, I was startled. I felt as if I could have no more communion with a man who could talk in that way. Go on your knees and not confess sin? My dear friends, I hope to die with this upon my lips, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.” I hold that I shall be out of Christ altogether when I reject repentance and confession. I know that my sins are forgiven me. There is no man in the world who preaches more than I do the doctrine that Christ has forever made a full atonement for the sins of all His people. But as to not making a confession of sin, God forbid these lips should ever utter anything so ungospel-like, so un-Christlike!

Let us put this matter before you pretty plainly. It is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make a confession of sin as before God the Judge, because they are no longer under God as a Judge. They are not ruled and governed upon the principle of law at all. Christ has forever taken away all their sins in a legal sense, so that no one can bring anything to their charge, and they need not confess where there is no one to accuse. The blood of Jesus has set His people entirely away from the position of prisoners under the law. They do not stand where they can be condemned. They are no longer culprits or criminals. They are taken from under the dominion of the Judge.

But what are God’s people? Why, they are children, and as long as God is their Father, and they are children, and imperfect children, nature teaches them that it is the duty of children to make a confession to their Father. If my boy should do anything amiss—God forbid it ever should be—but suppose it were some petty theft, I might say, “My child, as far as that theft is concerned, no policeman shall take you. You shall not be taken before the bar or put in prison for that. You are quite forgiven as far as that is

concerned.” I do not wish him to go before the magistrate and make a confession. But then he has offended me his father. And I, as his father, expect him to confess the wrong that he has done to me, and if he does not, I chasten him, not by way of penal infliction—that is not my part as a father, I have nothing to do with penalties to my children, but by way of chastisement that he may be led to see his fault, and may do it no more.

No father who has his wits about him ever chastens his child in the light of punishment for the offense itself. No, he says, *that* is not my business, the offense must be punished by God, or if it is an offense against the law of the land, by the law of the land. When a father scourges, he does it for chastisement, for the good of the person chastised, not as a vindication of law and order.

Now the Lord never chastens His people because of any sin in them, in order to punish them for their sin, for He has punished Christ instead of them—they are quite clear there. But now having become children, and offending as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess the sin, and acknowledge the iniquity? The grace of God in the heart would teach us all that it should be so.

We daily offend as children. We offend, as we could not offend if we were not children. I doubt my Father, I am guilty of a want of love to Him, or obedience to Him, I offend as I could not offend if I were not His child. Supposing that this offense against my Father is not at once washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence of it? Why, I shall get under the thrall of bad habit. I shall feel such defilement in my nature that I shall do it again, and again, and again, what I had once done, till I get into the habit of doing it.

If I am not washed from these offenses against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from Him. I shall begin to doubt His love to me. I shall tremble at Him. Most likely I shall be afraid to pray to Him—I shall get to be like the prodigal, who, while he was a child, was yet far off from his father. If I am not washed, I shall very soon have need to feel the rod, and I shall have it.

But oh! beloved, if the Lord Jesus Christ day by day shall come to me, and wash my feet from these defilements of offenses against my Father, why, then I shall to a great extent escape the rod. I shall feel a holy love to my Father. I shall walk in the light of His countenance. I shall have joy and peace through believing, and I shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord.

I think you can see the difference between Christ putting away sin by blood and by water. I think you can see the distinction between confessing sin *as a culprit*, and confessing *sin as a child*. And I think you can see how much gratitude you owe to Christ, that after having once set you free from the law, He day by day, as your Elder Brother, goes in before your Father's face, and still keeps you right before the Father, and when there has been any defilement, or any wrong, washes your feet from it, that you may still stand with peace in your conscience, with joy in your heart, with love in your bosom, and with the Father's love shed abroad in you.

Here is matter for gratitude, that having once washed head and hands and feet with blood, He still does daily wash my feet with water. For my part, I mean to keep on praying, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” And it shall be my joy that, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,” and “the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

IV. The last point is, MATTER FOR IMITATION.

Does Jesus wash our feet? Then we ought to wash one another's feet. Some of our brethren, the Scotch Baptists, were accustomed to wash the saints' feet literally. I dare say it would not do some of the saints much hurt, but still it never was intended for us to carry out literally the example of the Savior.

There is a spiritual meaning here, and what He means is this. If there is any deed of kindness or love that we can do for the very meanest and most obscure of God's people, we ought to be willing to do it—to be servants to God's servants—to feel like Abigail did, when she said to David, “Let your handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord.” Abigail became David's wife, that is the true position of every Christian, but yet she felt she was not worthy even to wash his servants' feet.

That must be our spirit. Do you know any poor bedridden soul? Go and talk with that poor woman, or that poor man. Seek to take comfort to that poor man's miserable lodgings. Do you know a brother who is rather angry in temper, and he needs a kind word said to him, and someone says, "I will not speak to any such person as he is?" Do it—do it, my dear brother—go and wash his feet!

Do you know one who has gone astray? Someone says, "I would not like to be seen in association with him." My dear friend, you are spiritual—go and restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Wash his feet! There is another riding the high horse—he is very, very proud. One says, "I am not going to humble myself to him." My dear brother, go to him, and wash his feet! Whenever there is a child of God who has any defilement upon him, and you are able to point it out and rid him of it, submit to any degradation, put yourself in any position, sooner than that child of God should be the subject of sin.

Especially let those who are highest among us seek to do the lowest offices. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Remember that Christ's way of rising is to go down. He descended, that He might ascend. And so must we. Let us count that evermore it is our highest honor and our greatest glory to lay aside all honor and all glory and to win honor and glory out of shame and humiliation for Christ Jesus' sake.

I believe this *is* done in this church. I hope we are as free as possible from the feeling of caste—God deliver us from the last relic and remnant of it! You are brethren. Love one another. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich in that he is made low." You are brethren, and one is your Master, even Christ. Try to carry out, every one of you to your utmost, the teaching of your Lord—that you should wash one another's feet. You have an opportunity of doing it in the collection—for I believe that these servants of God—these aged ministers, these ministers who are in great poverty—need today that you should by your contributions wash their feet.

(A Collection was made for the Relief of Poor Ministers.)

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